

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 00464 01 OF 02 202250Z
ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-01 DHA-02 /017 W
-----202303Z 120754 /63

P 202212Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2951

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 0464

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, EC

SUBJECT: MISSING/DECEASED U.S. CITS (YODER, DELILAH; HERSCH-
BERGER, JAMES; BISSELL, JANE; BOHN, STEPHEN;
DREISESZUN, RICHARD)

REFS: (A) ARTICLE BY CAROLE ARGUS, NEWSDAY SERVICE, PRINTED
ON PAGE 3AW OF MIAMI HERALD OF 17 JAN 77; (B) STATE 6668
AND PREVIOUS; (C) QUITO 336 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONCERNED WITH FACTUAL ERRORS AND TONE OF
REFERENCED ARTICLE PRINTED IN "MIAMI HERALD" AND POSSIBLY
OTHER PAPERS. DEPT. MAY WISH TO CONTACT APPROPRIATE
PAPERS TO CLARIFY FACTS AND EXPLAIN EXTENT OF EMBASSY IN-
VOLVEMENT IN SEARCH FOR MISSING U.S. CITS. ALSO,
FURTHER BRIEFINGS FOR INTERESTED CONGRESSMEN MAY SERVE TO
REDUCE MISUNDERSTANDING OF EMBASSY ROLE IN SEARCH FOR
MISSING U.S. CITS. FOLLOWING IS RECAPITULATION OF USG
EFFORTS TO DATE TO LOCATE MISSING U.S. CITS AND RESPONSE TO
SPECIFIC POINTS RAISED BY THE ARTICLE. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY HAS REPEATEDLY CONTACTED ALL APPROPRIATE LEVELS
AND AGENCIES OF GOE, FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY, BY DIPLOMATIC
NOTE, TO INDIVIDUAL POLICE COMMANDS BY LETTERS, TELEPHONE
CALLS, AND PERSONAL VISITS BY DCM, CONOFFS, AND OTHER EMB
OFFICERS. DCM AND CONSUL HAVE ALSO CALLED ON SECRETARY GENERAL
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PAGE 02 QUITO 00464 01 OF 02 202250Z

OF ADMIN (CABINET LEVEL) AND CHIEF OF NATIONAL POLICE TO
OBTAIN MORE EFFECTIVE GOE ACTION. EMBASSY HAS ADVISED DEPT
OF ALL DEVELOPMENTS AND PROMPTLY COMMUNICATED ALL REQUESTS,
SUGGESTIONS AND QUETOIONS RECEIVED FROM DEPT AND INTERESTED
PARTIES TO PROPER LOCAL AUTHORITIES. BY EMBASSY COUNT, MORE
THAN 100 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED WITHIN
OR BY USG ON THESE CASES. QUITO 336 PROVIDED EMBASSY ANALYSIS

OF GOE RESPONSIVENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN SEARCH FOR MISSING
US CITS.

3. EXAMPLES OF CONTINUING EMB ACTIONS TO LOCATE MISSING US
CITS AND CONTINUING ASSISTANCE TO PRIVATE INVESTIGATIVE
EFFORTS FOLLOW: A. EMBASSY AND CONGEN OFFICERS HAVE VISITED
CUENCA (ONE TIME), LIMON INDANZA (ONE TIME), BANOS (TWO TIMES),
SHELL-MERA (ONE TIME), AND AMBATO (TWO TIMES), IN CONNECTION
WITH THE DIFFERENT DISAPPEARANCES. ALL VISITS INVOLVED
CONTACT WITH POLICE AND OTHER OFFICIALS.

B. AFTER REQUEST BY PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR IN YODER/ HERSCH-
BERGER CASE, EMBASSY INSISTED THAT MARCELLO CARRION BE BROUGHT OUT
OF DISTRICT FOR QUESTIONING BY POLICE IN QUITO IN ORDER TO
AVOID THE EFFECTS OF HIS POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OVER AUTHORITIES
IN CUENCA. EMBASSY LOCAL INVESTIGATOR AND YODER FAMILY
PRIVATE INVESTIGATER WERE BOTH PRESENT DURING 20 DEC 76
POLICE INTERROGATION OF CARRION.

C. EMBASSY ARRANGED ECUADOREAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT
TRANSPORTATION FOR YODER FAMILY INVESTIGATER
(QUITO 6764, 7531).

D. EMBASSY INVESTIGATOR (RETIRED POLICE CAPTAIN)
ACCOMPANIED MR. WILLIAM BISSELL TO PROVINCIAL POLICE
HEADQUARTERS IN AMBATO AND THEN TO BANOS ON DEC. 30
TO ASSIST IN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEARCH PARTY
(QUITO 180).

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PAGE 03 QUITO 00464 01 OF 02 202250Z

E. EMBASSY STEPS TO PUBLICIZE GENERALLY DISAPPEARANCES
AND ELICIT FURTHER INFORMATION INCLUDE (1) BROADCAST
OF DESCRIPTIONS BY MISSIONARY RADIO HCJB; (2) BROADCAST
OF DESCRIPTIONS BY SHUARA TRIBE RADIO STATION; (3)
NOTIFICATION OF U.S. OIL COMPANIES OPERATING IN
AMAZON REGION; (4) NOTIFICATION OF PEACE CORPS
VOLUNTEERS AND MISSIONAIRES IN REGION; (5) POSTING
OF PHOTOS AND NOTICES IN PLACES FREQUENTED BY YOUNG
TRAVELLERS.

4. DEPT. MAY WISH TO REFUTE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS
AND FACTUAL ERRORS: EMBASSY UNAWARE OF FRUSTRATION ON THE
PART OF MR. BISSELL AS ALLEGED IN PARA 2 OF ARTICLE. WHEN
BISSELL CAME TO ECUADOR IN DEC. 76 HE COMMENTED TO CONOFF
THAT HE THOUGHT THAT ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES
TO FIND HIS DAUGHTER HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN BY EMBASSY AND
LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HE SAID FURTHER THAT HE BELIEVED HIS
DAUGHTER DEAD, BUT FELT THE NEED TO TAKE MORE POSITIVE
ACTION THAN WAITING BY TELEPHONE. IN SAME CONVERSATION,

PRIOR TO BISSELL'S TRIP TO BANOS, HE STATED THAT IT WAS HIS
OPINION THAT FINDING A BODY IN THE RUGGED TERRAIN AND DENSE
VEGETATION AROUND BANOS WOULD BE A NEAR IMPOSSIBILITY.
STILL, FOR HIS OWN PEACE OF MIND, HE FELT OBLIGED TO
MAKE THE EFFORT. IN STATE 6668 EMBASSY WAS INFORMED OF
BISSELL'S APPRECIATION FOR ASSISTANCE.

5. EMBASSY PUZZLED BY MRS. HERSCHBERGER'S STATEMENTS
THAT A) QUOTE THEY LET US KNOW JIM AND DELILAH HAD BEEN
BEHEADED END QUOTE AND B) THAT YODER/HERSCHBERGER WERE ABOUT
TO BE RESCUED BY HELICOPTER, QUITO 6263 REPEATED ECUADOR-
EAN POLICE REPORT THAT YODER/HERSCHBERGER HAD BEEN KILLED BY
INDIAN GUIDES. PARA TWO OF QUITO 6263 CONTAINING CLEAR
WARNING THAT REPORT WAS UNCONFIRMED. BEHEADING WAS NOT
MENTIONED. QUITO 6439 INFORMED DEPARTMENT THAT ECUADOREAN
POLICE REPORT UNSUBSTANTIATED. EMBASSY AT TOTAL LOSS FOR
SOURCE OF KIDNAPPING/HELICOPTER RESCUE STORY. STATE 301893
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PAGE 04 QUITO 00464 01 OF 02 202250Z

SAID THAT QUOTE RICK END QUOTE TELEPHONED ELEANOR YODER
WITH INFORMATION THAT WITCH DOCTOR WAS GOING TO RELEASE TWO
AMERICANS. QUITO 8710 INFORMED DEPARTMENT THAT RICHARD
MARIN DENIED MAKING ANY SUCH CALL AND THAT ON 13 DEC. 76
FAMILY DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF WITCH DOCTOR STORY. EMBOFFS
UNABLE TO FIND ANY REFERENCE TO ANY HELICOPTER ACTION IN
FILE.

6. STATEMENTS ABOUT MISSIONARY DEATHS AND SHRUNKEN

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PAGE 01 QUITO 00464 02 OF 02 202256Z
ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-01 DHA-02 /017 W
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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2952

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 0464

HEADS GROSSLY EXAGGERATE SITUATION IN ECUADOR TODAY. WHILE DANGERS OF TRAVEL IN ORIENTE (AMAZON) REGION ARE VERY REAL, ONLY SHRUNKEN HEADS KNOWN TO EMBASSY ARE THOSE OF MONKEYS FOR SALE TO TOURISTS. EMBASSY WOULD ASSUME THAT DEATH OF 5 MISSIONARIES REFERS TO WYCLYFFE MISSIONARIES KILLED BY INDIANS IN UPPER REGIONS OF AMAZON IN 1956. EMBASSY IS UNAWARE OF SUCH KILLINGS OF FOREIGN MISSIONAIRES SINCE THEN.

7. A MINOR DETAIL PERHAPS BUT CARRION NOT KNOWN TO FREQUENT GRAN CASION HOTEL, BUT RATHER TO APPROACH TOURISTS IN CUENCA.

8. BOHN DEATH ORIGINALLY REPORTED TELEPHONICALLY TO AMEMBASSY QUITO ON 8 OCT. 1975. MESSAGE PASSED TO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL AND TELEGRAM SENT TO JOHN BOHN SAME DATE (GUAYAQUIL 1585) BOHN HAD BEEN DEAD ALMOST 24 HOURS PRIOR TO REPORT AND IN ABSENCE OF REFRIGERATION FACILITIES IN REMOTE TROPICAL LIMON, ECUADOR, BODY WAS BURIED ON 8 OCT. 75. AT NOT TIME, TO EMBASSY KNOWLEDGE, DID MR. BOHN SR. EXPRESS INTEREST IN AUTOPSY.

9. CONCLUSION: AT PRESENT IT APPEARS THAT GOE, WITH ENCOURAGEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP BY EMBASSY HAS TAKEN ALL REASONABLE STEPS WITHIN ECUADOREAN LAW TO LOCATE MISSING US CITIZENS. GOE EFFORTS CONTINUE. IT CANNOT BE STRESSED TOO STRONGLY THAT ALL MISSING US CITIZENS INTENTIONALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 QUITO 00464 02 OF 02 202256Z

DEPARTED FROM NORMALLY TRAVELLED TOURIST ROUTES IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE. IN DOING SO THEY EXPOSED THEMSELVES TO GREATER THAN AVERAGE RISKS OF ACCIDENT, ILLNESS AND FOUL PLAY. THE ORIENTE REGION OF ECUADOR IS AS YET LITTLE EXPLORED AND ALMOST TOTALLY DEVOID OF ROADS OR OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION. IN THE EVENT OF ACCIDENT, SUCH AS FALL FROM MOUNTAIN TRAIL, DISCOVERY AND/OR RECOVERY OF BODIES PROBABLY IMPOSSIBLE. IN THE EVENT OF FOUL PLAY, POSSIBILITIES OF DISPOSING OF EVIDENCE ALMOST INFINITE.

10. THE ABOVE MIGHT BE OF USE TO THE DEPT SHOULD IT CHOOSE TO SEND A LETTER IN RESPONSE TO THE NEWSDAY SERVICE STORY, OR IN FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH INTERESTED CONGRESSMEN AND THE PUBLIC. EMBASSY WELCOMES ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIONS THAT MIGHT PRODUCE RESULTS. BLOOMFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, WELFARE & WHEREABOUTS
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3547285
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MISSING/DECEASED U.S. CITS (YODER, DELILAH; HERSCH- BERGER, JAMES; BISSELL, JANE; BOHN, STEPHEN; DREISESZUN, RICHARD)
TAGS: CASC, EC, US, (YODER, DELILAH), (HERSCHBERGER, JAMES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/eee407d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009